



DatelineERS

New ERS research and analysis at: www.ers.usda.gov

Economic Research Service

February/March 2012

U.S. Department of Agriculture

ERS is a primary source of economic research and analysis from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, providing timely information on economic and policy issues related to agriculture, food, the environment, and rural America.



Shutterstock

Commodity Markets and Trade

ERS Outlook reports provide timely analysis of major commodity markets and trade.

Released in March

- Feed
- Wheat
- Oil Crops
- Rice
- Cotton and Wool
- Sugar and Sweeteners
- Livestock, Dairy, and Poultry
- Vegetables and Melons
- Fruit and Tree Nuts

All reports along with a calendar of future releases are available at:

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/outlook

Trends in U.S. Farmland Values and Ownership

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/EIB92

Because farm real estate represents much of the value of U.S. farm sector assets, large swings in farmland values can affect the financial well-being of agricultural producers. *Trends in U.S. Farmland Values and Ownership* indicates that over the last few years, U.S. farmland values have been supported by strong farm earnings, which have helped the farm sector in many regions to withstand the residential housing downturn. Historically low interest rates are likely a significant contributor to farming's current ability to support higher land values. About 40 percent of U.S. farmland has been rented over the last 25 years. Non-operators (landowners who do not themselves farm) owned 29 percent of land in farms in 2007, though that proportion has declined since 1992.

The Food Assistance Landscape

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR123

About 1 in every 4 Americans participates in at least 1 of the 15 domestic food and nutrition assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) that provide a nutritional safety net for millions of children and low-income adults. *The Food Assistance Landscape* examines trends in USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs through fiscal 2011. It also summarizes a number of ERS research reports released in fiscal 2011 on topics related to the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC).



Shutterstock

Farm Programs and Environmental Compliance

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/eib94

In recent years, direct payments—a type of farm commodity program payment—have made up a large share of Federal agriculture assistance that could be withheld from farmers who fail to comply with highly erodible land conservation (conservation compliance and sodbuster) or wetland conservation (swampbuster) provisions, known collectively as environmental compliance requirements. *The Future of Environmental Compliance Incentives in U.S. Agriculture* analyzes the potential impact of different policy choices. If direct payments are sharply reduced or eliminated to help reduce the Federal budget deficit, compliance incentives would be reduced on many farms, potentially increasing environmental quality problems. Some farmers will still be subject to compliance through existing Federal agricultural programs (e.g., conservation or disaster programs) or programs that may succeed direct payments. Making federally subsidized crop insurance subject to compliance could also make up some of the lost incentive to farmers.

Amber Waves

Amber Waves magazine covers the full range of ERS research and analysis, covering food, farming, natural resources, and rural America.

www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves

Per Capita Income Grows Faster in Delta Regional Authority Counties

Rise in incomes in counties receiving funding from the Delta Regional Authority stemmed largely from investments in the health and social services sector.

Government Commodity Payments Continue to Shift to Larger Farms, Higher Income Households

Unless the design of commodity programs changes substantially, current payment trends favoring larger farms are likely to continue.

Identifying Federal Farm Programs' Potential Overlaps

Because farm program designs and purposes vary, producers may participate in, and receive benefits from, multiple programs on the same farm, increasing the potential for overlap.

Switching the Payment Trigger for an Area-Based Revenue Program Could Increase Participation

Changing from a State-level trigger to a farm-level trigger could potentially result in higher payments and a higher ACRE signup rate.

Creating Rural Wealth in America

www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err131

No wealth creation strategy will work in all contexts. Rural communities able to identify strategies best suited to their existing wealth endowments and local priorities are likely in the best position to create wealth. ***Rural Wealth Creation: Concepts, Strategies, and Measures*** discusses the role of wealth creation in the rural development process, how wealth can be created in rural communities, and how its accumulation and effects can be measured.



Shutterstock



China's Volatile Pork Industry

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ldp/2012/01Jan/ldpm21101

With China's emergence as a new source of potential demand for U.S. pork exports, it is important for U.S. farmers, business leaders, and policymakers to understand the volatile nature of China's pork industry.

2012 Farm Income Forecast

www.ers.usda.gov/features/farmincome

USDA Agricultural Baseline Projections to 2021

www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/OCE121

How to get more information...

More information about the items featured in DatelineERS can be found on our Website: www.ers.usda.gov by going to the web address listed in each article. This newsletter is available online at www.ers.usda.gov/news